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UNIVERSITY FEMALES ARE MORE FEARFUL AND MALES ARE MORE EGOTISTIC: POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL PURSUITS AND RESPONSE TO CRISIS [1]

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Summary.—Clusters of items that indicate fearfulness and egotism were derived from a data base accumulated over 10 years. There were 235 men and 331 women whose ages ranged between 18 and 29 yr. Women displayed higher scores on the fearfulness cluster and lower scores on the egotism cluster than men; the interaction was statistically significant. Discriminant analyses indicated that the two clusters explained 13% of the variance for the sex differences. The relatively enhanced fearfulness and decreased egotism among university women compared to their male cohorts may be a useful predictor for entry into novel vocations and responsiveness to catastrophes involving other young women.

As cultural opportunities become equalized for men and women, their psychological differences could be amplified (1, 3). We reasoned that successful attempts to enter vocations should reflect two reciprocal factors, generalized fearfulness and egotism. A primary manifestation of fearfulness should be presented as an increased incidence of phobic endorsements while a central feature of egotism should entail overemphasis upon the importance of the self in relation to other people. We hypothesized that, whereas traditional female factors would amplify enhanced fearfulness and reduced egotism, the reverse would occur for men. During the last 10 years data have been collected to determine the prevalence and incidence of possible temporal lobe signs in the normal population. Items within this data base appeared appropriate to assess the validity of our hypotheses.

All male and female university students who had endorsed either Protestant or Roman Catholic denominations and who were between the ages of 18 and 29 yr. were obtained from the major data base of the Personal Philosophy Inventory. There were in all 235 men and 331 women. The denominations were included to permit inference of socialization since in this population of students about 85% who endorse Roman Catholicism are first or second generation offspring of immigrants or French Canadian while about 85% of the students who endorse Protestant denomination originate from families who have had several generations within the culture.

A three-way analysis of variance, with one level repeated, was completed by SPSS^{x} (MANOVA) on a VAX computer. The nonrepeated measures were sex and denomination. The repeated measure was the cluster of items designated as fear (6 items) and egotism (6 items). The score for each cluster was the percentage of items appropriately endorsed. Fear items included "I am afraid of earthquakes" (yes), "I am not afraid of snakes (no), "I am afraid of mice" (yes), "Lightning is one of my fears" (yes), "I do not worry about catching diseases" (no), and "I have experienced terror" (yes). Point biserial correlations between each item and the cluster mean ranged between 0.42 and 0.58.

Egotism items included "If there was a car accident, I believe I would have a better chance than most people to survive" (yes), "I like to poke fun at people" (yes), "My spouse or (girl or

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boy) friend should do what I want out of love for me" (yes), "Some people are so bossy that I feel like doing the opposite of what they request, even though I know they are right" (yes), "I like to spend time persuading people to do things" (yes) and "I lack self-confidence" (no). The correlations between the items and the cluster ranged between 0.39 and 0.59; the correlation between the two clusters was not statistically significant ($r = 0.05$, $p > .05$).

As hypothesized the most powerful effect was a statistically significant interaction of sex by cluster ($F_{1,362} = 74.54$, $p < .001$). Men displayed higher (means with standard deviations in parenthesis) egotism [53 (22)%] and lower fear [38 (22)%] scores while women displayed lower egotism [42 (22)%] and higher fear scores [52 (24)%]. To ensure that responding in a favorable manner by women was minimal, responses on a cluster of control items (2) was covaried before the analyses. The covariate was statistically significant ($F_{1,361} = 29.58$, $p < .001$) and displayed a positive slope. The statistically significant interaction between cluster and sex was still evident ($F_{1,362} = 82.56$, $p < .001$).

Discriminant analyses indicated that the fear cluster explained 8% of the variance between the sexes while the egotism cluster accommodated an additional 4% (final Wilks lambda = 0.87; canonical correlation = 0.35, $\chi^2 = 90.22$). Despite the significant sex differences, the function classified only 64% of the cases correctly.

If the manner in which university students endorse psychometric items reflects their general behavior, these results indicate that young women experience more fearfulness and less egotism than same-age men. Although the effect explained only 13% of the variance, this magnitude may be sufficient to affect competitiveness within novel vocational settings that are not traditionally associated with female employment.

The relatively trivial effect of denomination, our crude index of culturalization, upon the two clusters compared to the effect for sex suggests sex is a powerful factor that subjugates traditional subcultural differences. The higher fearfulness among women might also explain the greater responses to random catastrophes that involve females. For example, the shooting deaths of female university (Montreal) students by a male evoked sustained generalized protests and concerns among women nationally. The role of this powerful effect in decision-making about vocations and response to catastrophe requires further investigation.

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